



Trish Doyle MP

Member for Blue Mountains



02 4751 3298 | bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au | 132 Macquarie Rd Springwood NSW 2777

New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

Warragamba Dam

18 September 2019

Tonight I speak about the New South Wales Liberal Government's plan to raise the Warragamba Dam wall and flood the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in a cynical and dishonest exercise to open up flood-prone land for property developers along the Hawkesbury-Nepean River.

I have spoken about this issue in this House a number of times and I have also outlined my concerns about the real motivation of the Liberals in pursuing this agenda. But I now wish to further explain why the proposal to raise the dam wall is not just a bad idea, but it is a dishonest proposal.

I am also concerned to see scaremongering being funded by the New South Wales Government and the State Emergency Service [SES] being politicised to support billboards and newspaper advertising that seek to panic the people of western Sydney and the Hawkesbury about their exposure to flood risk.

It is distressing to see the SES being politicised. It is shameful that the Government impacts the integrity of our SES. I express my fulsome support for the SES, but I must leap to its defence when I see the frank and fearless advice of public servants being used to push a nakedly political agenda that has its basis in supporting a property development agenda along the flood plains of the Nepean and the Hawkesbury.

As the member for Penrith said when he cast his arm out wide down at Penrith Lakes: There will be development for as far as the eye can see. Standing in an empty field next to a flood level marker he said:

As far as the eye can see, to that tree line, all the way around, that's the urban development land.

As the shadow Minister for emergency services, I am very concerned to see the SES being drawn into a Liberal Party political campaign, and its reputation, the goodwill that exists for the service, and the trust that people have placed in the service being used for a brazen scare campaign. This is especially troubling when you consider that the Emergency Services Levy, which funds so much of the work of the SES, is raised by a tax on individual insurance policy holders.

Essentially, the Liberal Party is funding a dishonest scare campaign using the hip-pocket contributions of ordinary residents.

Instead of paying for vital emergency response and rescue equipment, the Emergency Services Levy is now being used to fund Liberal Party propaganda. The upper House is conducting an inquiry into the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall. The submissions it has received—including my own, I might add—make interesting reading. These submissions present the facts about flood risk.

The former Liberal Mayor and a serving Liberal Councillor on Blue Mountains City Council, Daniel Myles, who opposes the proposal to raise the wall, makes the following point:

Of particular concern is the large amount of high ground draining into the River below the Dam. From the Dam to Windsor is approximately 61 kilometres of River. This includes all the flow from the Grose River, Colo River and MacDonald River not to mention Glenbrook and Erskine Creeks near the Dam and many more tributaries which do not even have names. Things get worse below Sackville where the River receives runoff from both sides.

The flood risk arises not because of a lack of capacity in the Warragamba Dam, but because of a convergence of multiple river systems at Richmond and Windsor, and the tidal effects present as far up river as Ebenezer. Perhaps most distressing, however, is the advice of Professor Jamie Pittock from the Australian National University, who said:

The NSW Government's strategy for managing flood risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley is predicated on allowing more people to move into harm's way ... Flood risk has been exacerbated by local councils and the NSW Government approving housing developments on low lying lands over several decades.

I also note the advice provided to the Department of Planning by Molino Stewart in 2012, which identified choke points and bottlenecks in the road network, which presented a risk to human life in a flood event. In more than 50 per cent of the subsectors from which residents and businesses would need to be evacuated, the major risk factor was not the flood itself, but the capacity of the road network to handle the traffic that would arise during an evacuation.

We have a scenario where the proposal being put forward will not actually reduce flood risk enough to prevent a major flood scenario and that will be used to justify a huge development agenda.

Shame.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment): It is disappointing that the member for Blue Mountains would put a bunch of *[words expunged]* on the public record and would completely mislead this House when it comes to the proposal to raise the wall of the Warragamba Dam. The reality is that this has nothing to do with development, and the member for Blue Mountains knows it.

Ms Trish Doyle: It has everything to do with development; everything.

Mr MATT KEAN: It has nothing to do with development, and the member for Blue Mountains knows it.

In fact, we should be ruling out having any development because of the raising of the flood plain, then the Labor Party will have no scaremongering to do on this issue. The reality is that this is a recommendation because of a body of work by Infrastructure NSW.

It is not about development: It is about the safety of citizens. The member for Blue Mountains knows full well that the Government is currently reviewing that recommendation, and how we can mitigate risk to life and property in the Nepean River.

We will do that through an independent process; the Government has not made a decision.

For the member for Blue Mountains to come in here and *[words expunged]* to the House and misrepresent the reality, that it is focused on protecting lives and citizens, is an absolute disgrace.

~

September 19, 2019

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment): By leave: I refer to words I used during a private members' statement on 18 September 2019 and I move:

That certain words giving effect to an accusation about the member for Blue Mountains be expunged from my reply to the private member's statement by the member for Blue Mountains.

Motion agreed to.